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When the Fates Decree

By GRANT M. OSBA

When the Fates Decree

"THERE'S A DESTINY THAT SHAPES OUR ENDS"

BY
GRANT H. CODE, '14 PEABODY HIGH SCHOOL
PITTSBURGH, PA.

[1914]

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No1.
JUN 26 1914

When the Fates Decree

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

Aeneas, the Trojan leader

Ilioneus, his friend

Anchises, his father

Achates, his armor-bearer

Pluto, King of Hades

Rhadamanthus, Rhadamanthus, Minos, Aeachus — Judges

Dido, Queen of Carthage

Anna, her sister

Barca, her nurse

Proserpina, Queen of Hades

Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos — The Fates

The stage directions given here were planned for use in a schoolroom whose one door was to the left of the teacher's desk. Where more exits are available, the stage business can be easily altered to suit. No scenery is necessary. The properties demanded are five chairs and a scroll for Aeachus. Two chairs stand side by side down right. They are the thrones of Pluto and Proserpina, and may be raised a few steps above the level of the stage. Opposite to them three more chairs are placed for the judges. If a curtain is used the entire cast is discovered on the stage for the opening chant. If no curtain is used, the cast files on, chanting. Pluto and Proserpina enter first, and they are followed by the judges, the Fates, Dido, Anna, Barca, Aeneas, Achates, Ilioneus and Anchises.

TIME: One hundred years after the death of Aeneas.

PLACE: The judgment hall of Hades.

* * * * * * *

All: Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus, and old Minos, king of Crete,
Sitting here in stern tribunal in dark Pluto's judgment hall,
Hear the pleas of shadows passing, seeking justice one and all;
Hear the pleas of shadows, who, kneeling, beg for mercy at their feet.
Woe, ah, woe! no sweet compassion reigns beyond the Acheron:
Here the miserable sinner is absolved not from his sin;
Only souls whose lives were virtue the Elysian fields can win,
Can escape the searing torture of the waves of Phlegethon.

(*All chant "Woe, woe, woe," continuously while Pluto speaks*)

Pluto (C): Mine is the realm of the shades, allotted to me for all ages;
Here do I wield my iron power o'er the spirits of Hades,
Sharing my ebony throne with Proserpina, daughter of Ceres,
Queen of Eumenides dire, and worshipped at night at the cross-roads.
Here within walls adamantine wander the spirits by legions,
Through sad Persephone's Garden, whose dim and indefinite mazes are
Edged by funeral pines, and shivering aspens and myrtle;
Deep in the gulf below are lying the giants in Tartarus,
Ay, and Salmoneus also, he who dared imitate Jupiter.—
Hence now, ye murmuring shades! depart till our high court is open;
Then shall ye plead for your souls and seek to find mercy in Hades.

(*Pluto paces off (LIE) laughing sardonically. The others follow, leaving Dido and Anna alone on the stage*).

Dido (LC): Anna, my sister, why hast thou brought me here to this grim judgment hall, where these ghastly shapes put me constantly in mind of my wretched fate?

Anna (RC): Ah, poor Elissa, why should I bring thee here but to meet the shade of him who is the author of all thy misery?

Dido: What, is Aeneas really come?

Anna: I was informed by a true messenger, who saw him among the crowd of spirits just landed from old Charon's bark.

(*Dido steps down (C), raising hands in prayer. Anna retires a few steps, UPR.*)

Dido (C): O ye immortal gods, if there be any whose ear is keen enough to catch these accents of a soul enthralled in Hades, I thank thee now that thou has sent to me that wretch. He won my love, my soul, my life, and with them Tyrian wealth and power; and then, weary of the too easy conquest, set sail upon the ocean winged with white, seeking another kingdom and a Latin bride. Often have I stood upon the shores of that dark, sluggish stream, over whose waters in a phantom skiff the souls of dead men come. Long have I waited till he should appear, to plead his cause to this awful court, and now, he comes at last? (*To Anna*).

Anna (Down RC): Yes, at last! His father, Anchises, has come from the Elysian fields with Ilioneus, to welcome him to bliss eternal, when he shall have passed this Stygian court.

Dido (C): Never shall false Aeneas be released from that keen torment which awaits him here. Does he believe that he shall escape the punishment which Pluto has allotted to faithless lovers? Faithless, said I? Yes, and those who love too well, selling their souls to the heartless god who pierces human hearts with shafts of gold. (*X down R. Sits on steps of throne.*)
(*Enter Barca, blind and groping*).

Barca (L): Dido! Elissa! What, my fair Phoenician, dost thou not hear old Barca? Hark! (*She stands listening*).

Anna (X to C): There stands the soul of true fidelity. Faithful to you in life, when you were gone, she then served me, because I had been dear to you. Though she grew old and blind, until she died, she always waited on my every need and carried out each wish before I voiced it. (*X to LC*).
Come hither, Barca. (*Leads her to Dido*).Here is Phoenician Dido, whom thou seekest.

Dido (RC): Barca!

Barca (C): Ah, my beloved mistress, often have I longed to hear the music of thy sweet voice ringing through some cool Elysian glade. When will dark Pluto release thee from this place?

Dido (RC): Never, I fear, O Barca, when the choice came to me: Either to remain true to my dead Sychaeus, or else to give myself to the Trojan lord, Aeneas, then I forgot my former high resolve, never to wed again; now I must suffer for that hasty act. If I had only known that he would prove as false as his base ancestor, Laomedon! If I had only known that he would basely leave me, after winning all my love!
(*Dido up to C. Anna follows, crossing to UP RC. Barca X to R.*)

Anna (Up RC): These regrets are vain. The day has come for you to have revenge.

Dido (C) (Turning) I had forgotten, Barca, Aeneas comes to-day to plead his case before this three-fold judgment-seat. Here I will charge him with his baseness, and here Pluto shall allot him a fitting punishment.

Anna (RC): Here he comes, I see the glinting of his shadowy mail.

(*Enter Aeneas (LIE), followed by Achates. Barca joins Anna. UP RC*).

Aeneas (LC): This is the judgment hall, Achates, where I must pause awhile, until the sages three shall review my life work and give me passports to the western islands.

Dido (C): Ay, here thou must pause!

Aeneas (LC): What! Dido, is it thou? So we meet thus after all these years! Dost thou remember when we stood within the walls of lofty Carthage, and watched the setting sun with magic art gild the temple built by us together? That was after Mercury had bade me hasten on my way, and tear myself from thy embraces to fulfill my destiny.

Dido (RC): Dost thou suppose I have forgot the treacherous departure, thou perjured son of Laomedon? Do not think thou canst beguile me with that story of thy summons by the gods, or win forgiveness with thy smooth discourse.

Aeneas (LC): Still cherishing these bitter thoughts against me? I should have thought thy long association with wisdom in this hall, where it resides, would have shown thee the injustice of these charges of thine, and changed this bitter hatred which thou bearest me.

Dido (RC): Truly thou speakest in a manly spirit to jeer at me because of my imprisonment here and failure to attain the meads of joy.

Aeneas (LC): Thou art unjust. I did not mean to mock thee.

Dido (C): Then thou must be so practised in the art of mockery that bitter jibes flow off thy tongue without thy bidding. (*Turns her back*).

Aeneas (to Achates): Verily there is no reasoning with a woman.

Dido (to Anna): Well, let him mock me now. His hour of trial will come.

(*Enter Achises and Ilioneus, (LIE). Dido and Barca whisper, (R). Ilioneus (R) greets Achates (LC)*).

Anchises (C) embracing Aeneas): My son, Aeneas, hast thou come at last, thy long vigil ended?

Aeneas(kneeling): Yes, father, I have come. My work on earth is finished. My drear probation over, and now I claim thy blessing.

Anchises: A three-fold blessing rest upon thee, that of thy father, whom thou rescued from the flames of Troy, that of thy grateful household gods exalted, and, last of all, the blessing of the ages who will thank thee for the legacy bequeathed them in the undying glory of the Romans, who will be the first to establish government on the basis of liberty and equality for all men.

(*Aeneas rises, C. Anchises steps RC*).

Ilioneus (LC): My long expected leader, I salute thee. Why hast thou tarried in the world above? Thy son, Ascanius, has long been with us; so have many other of thy line.

Aeneas (C): The gods are jealous and demand certain burial rites: A prayer recited, and a handful of earth sprinkled on the dead body. A handful of earth! It is a little thing, and yet for want of it I have roved the world a hundred years. In a battle with the Rutulians I fought, and, wounded sore, was pressed back to the bank of the swift-flowing Numicus. A bold Rutulian chief with bloody sword upheaved cut through my guard. I fell reeling into the flood. My brave Achates avenged my death. Then, turning to the river, he breathed a prayer and plunged in after me. The current bore our bodies out to sea, where they now lie in coral sepulchres. Our souls together have roamed the world till now.

Ilioneus (LC): Thou art a true son of old Troy, my brave Achates.

Achates (L): I have done nothing. I simply followed where my master went and did his bidding.

Ilioneus: That shall be thine epitaph throughout the ages, and men may do far worse than follow thee.

Dido (R): How slow the minutes crawl along! When will the judges come? That fellow's babbling stings mine ears; I cannot bear it.

Anna (R): Patience, my sister; see! they are approaching.

(*Anna, Dido, and Barca retire UP R. Aeneas and his friends move UP L. Enter Rhadamanthus, Minos and, Aeacus. They take their places behind the table L. A. nearest the audience, R. next, and M. farthest away. Pluto and Proserpina enter, cross to the thrones and sit,*

Pluto (*R*): All ye spirits, now draw nigh, for our great court is waiting to give justice to those who seek it here. After death every man must render an account of his stewardship and receive his reward or punishment. What case is first upon our books to-day?

Aeacus (*Reading from a scroll*): That of the Trojan warrior, Aeneas, he craves permission to enter the Elysian fields.

Pluto: Now if the Trojan be present, let him step forward and stand where all the court may see him.

(*Aeneas steps out from the group of his friends and stands, C*).

Aeacus: Art thou Aeneas?

Aeneas (*C*): I am the god Aeneas. After the fall of Troy, my ancient home, I saved my father, my small son, Ascanius, and the images of the Trojan Penates from the flames. Awhile I tarried hard by Ida's mount, where other fugitives attached themselves to me, until a mighty company had assembled. At last, when the next spring was unfurling its timid flags of green, my father ordered us to make sail. Sadly we left the Troad far behind. In Thrace we first sought refuge, but fled the land accursed by the murder of a kinsman. At Delos the oracle bade us seek our ancient fatherland, whence the founders of our race once came. So I bore our household gods over the sea in my fleet; though plagues destroyed many of my comrades, though vile Harpies threatened, cruel monsters of the deep beset my way, and pleasant countries tempted me aside, still I proceeded; even when my beloved father died, I left his bones in a Sicilian tomb, and sought Italia. At last I reached the longed-for shores, whence old Dardanus came. Then I founded my city of Lavinium, and thought to find peace; but no, some jealous god forbade, and I was harassed by war. My son, Ascanius, however, established a happier city, Alba Longa, and handed down a line of kings. A daughter of this race bore twin sons to Mars, one of them, great Romulus, founded the city on the seven hills where the Penates of my fatherland still dwell. So, having made a home for my conquered gods, I seek a resting place in Elysium for myself.

Pluto (*R*): This is a noble story; but know, Aeneas, no man may reach the blessed field until these judges have examined him.

Rhadamanthus (*L*): Stranger, have you secured a sponsor from the Elysianfields who shall corroborate your story?

Aeneas (*RC*): My father Anchises, he shall speak for me.

Anchises (*coming down LC*): I am ready to testify before this court that my son's story is true, and that a hundred other things are true, which modesty forbade him mention.

Minos (*L*): Were it not better, brother judges, that another than his father should stand sponsor for him? Paternal love may color the witness which he bears.

Aeacus (L): Thy words are true, O Minos.

Rhadamanthus (L): Father Anchises, we will hear thy testimony, but another must be sponsor for thy son.

Ilioneus (C): Let me then plead here for good Aeneas.

Rhadamanthus: Who art thou?

Ilioneus (C): A Trojan I, who followed all the wanderings of Aeneas. I was a captain under him; part of his fleet was in my command and I preserved it, when the wrath of Juno caused it to be scattered over the sea before Aeolian winds.

Minos: This man doth seem to be a fitting person to pledge his faith for Aeneas. Let us accept him.

Aeacus: I am content.

Rhadamanthus: We will allow thee to go surety for this man. See that thy testimony and that of all thy witnesses be true.

Ilioneus (C): Perjury is foreign to the hearts of Trojans who have been deemed worthy to enter the blessed gardens.

Rhadamanthus: Well spoken. Now all attend; a soul stands here on trial.

Dido (stepping forward RC): And never did a soul deserve more deep damnation.

Rhadamanthus: Who art thou that makes this strange assertion?

Ilioneus (LC): The Carthaginian queen!

Aeneas (RC): Dido!

Dido (C): I am she. Behold the sad and mournful spirit of Dido, once the queen of lofty Carthage. I dare to stand before this dreadful court and accuse this faithless Trojan to his face! He stole my heart with his wily tongue; he inspired me first with pity, then with love. I gave both freely. He took all I had to offer, love and a royal welcome for himself, shelter and food and riches for his men. Then, tired of me, he left me seeking the conquest of another heart and another land.

Minos: This is a grave charge and must be carefully investigated.

Ilioneus (LC): My lord, this woman is mad with hatred and a desire for revenge on someone, nay, on anyone, whom the venom of her tongue can reach. She was disappointed in her hopes of Elysium. What is more natural than that she should seek to disappoint him who, she says, rejected her?

Anchises (L, standing before the judges): I pray thee disregard this woman's testimony. Her jealous fury makes her slander my son.

Roadamanthus: In this court no testimony may be disregarded. All have the right to speak. It is for us to weigh the evidence with a steady hand and render righteous judgments. Now, Dido, speak, and tell thy story clearly, from the very beginning.

Dido (C): I was a princess of old Tyre, until I fled that bloody land and built my citadel in the land of Lybia and called it Carthage. One day a band of Trojans landed near my shores. They had been driven from their course by a tempest, they said; their leader was lost, and with him all hopes of reaching Italy. Not unacquainted with grief, I had learned to succor the unfortunate, so I received them and entertained them till their leader came. This Trojan leader was Aeneas. It was his fleet that I restored. I called Ilioneus to witness, for he commanded the ships I rescued. Speak, chieftain! Have I told the truth?

Ilioneus (LC): Ay, Queen, thou hast spoken truly, but to what purpose? This does not prove thine accusations.

Dido (C): Nay, be not so hasty. Thou hast admitted this, my generous reception of Aeneas. Thou shalt admit still more. Mark, judges, how the man repaid my kindness. Even from the first he was false and deceiving. He thought, forsooth: "Here I am in a strange country, whose people are hostile to mine. How long they will tolerate my presence I know not. There is danger in tarrying here, yet I would not leave this goodly land so soon. I will seek favor in Queen Dido's eyes. Her love shall protect me." Thus did he reason that my love might be his shield. For his advantage he made love to me. When my counselors advised against him, and my soothsayers foretold dire misfortunes which should come upon myself and my city by this man's hand, I laughed them all to scorn. He gave me precious gifts, saved from the treasure house of Priam; and many an evening seated at the banquet I hung upon his words, while he recounted tales of his prowess. Thus he won me, and used my love while it served him. Doubtless, this was fit amusement for a hero! Then, when for his sake I had offended the Nomad Kings of Lybia, when I had forgotten all but him, the business of my kingdom-my vow of deathless devotion to dead Sychaeus, my womanly reserve, all! all! —— then he deserted me basely, like a coward, said he was summoned by the gods and must seek Italy, his destined home!
So he departed, and left me to die by my own hand.
(*Dido pauses, overcome; her sister supports her*).

Anna (RC): Answer now, Aeneas. Has she told the truth?

Aeneas (LC): Most noble judges, she has told a true story, and she has lied most falsely. The facts are true, but the spirit is a fabrication, a garment of lies on a frame of truth, a picture well drawn, and yet all the colors false to nature. It is true that she received us with great hospitality, true that I made her presents fitting her queenly estate, that I recited, *at her bidding*, the story of my city's fall, that we loved, that I at last departed. All this is true.

Anna (RC): He has admitted his perfidy. What need is there of further testimony?

Aeneas (LC): Stop! In my admission there was nothing wrong. All my alleged wrongdoings lie in the motive and the circumstances Dido has assigned to me. To my every deed she has attached some dark and sinister motive. No deed can in itself be wrong. The motive and the circumstances make the crime. Because of this, no mortal can rightly judge the deeds of other mortals. The gods alone can read the hearts of men, and from them judge. When I reveal the true purposes which guided me, this convicting evidence shall melt away.

Anna (R): But wilt thou reveal these motives truly? How can we know that thou wilt not change the evidence to suit thy need?

Ilioneus (C): Judge not! If thou art endowed with wisdom and insight into the purposes of men, let Rhadamanthus quit his place, and do thou take it.

Pluto: Silence! Aeneas, now proceed!

Aeneas (LC): Hear my true motives. I gave her gifts, for it was fitting that the queen who entertained my people should have presents suited to her rank. I told my story, but not until she bade me. I did not seek her love, she gave it me without my asking. Tell me, when such a gift was offered by such a royal lady, how could any man refuse it?

Rhadamanthus: I grant thee, that when this lady put forth all her charms to win thee, if indeed this be true, she cannot well complain that thou shouldst love her.

Dido (R): But it is false, great Rhadamanthus, false. With art and cunning did the Trojan win me. His glance was fire, his accents passionate, his looks, and words, and gifts all testified his deathless love.

Ilioneus (RC): Say, rather, that his glance was bold, and therefore different from that of the servile courtiers around thee. The story of the war in which his city was overthrown and so many of his friends were killed of course filled him with emotion. Wouldst thou have him tell it like a schoolboy reciting his lesson. Canst thou relate the murder of Sychaeus and never let a tremor shake thy voice?

Achates (Down L before the judges): May I speak what I know of this matter?

Rhadamanthus: Thy name?

Achates (L): Achates, the armor bearer of Aeneas.

Rhadamanthus: Speak.

Achates: It was plain through all the court, and rumor spread the news through all the land, that from the first night Queen Dido madly loved Aeneas and employed every art known to women to storm his heart.

Dido (R): Wilt thou take the word of a mere attendant against the oath of a queen?

Minos: All are equal before this court.

Anna (RC): Then hear the testimony of the old nurse of my sister. She has just come from the Elysian fields and her testimony should have weight. Step forward, Barca.

Barca (Down C): I am sure, great judges, that my mistress, Dido, was never guilty of these bold attempts to win the heart of that upstart, Aeneas. I have been her servant ever since she married my master, Sychaeus. I was his old nurse when he was a boy in Tyro. Ah, me, what a fine lad he was!

Rhadamanthus: Never mind Sychaeus, good Barca, we are interested in Dido only.

Barca (C): Well, well! She was always a girl of becoming modesty, never bold and forward in her speech, but rather shy; half afraid of her own voice she was. Why, I remember one day when Pygmalion——well, it is no matter. But I am sure she would never have been so bold as openly to seek the love of Aeneas.
(*Barca retires UP RC*).

Dido (RC): Now, ye wise ones, judge whether to believe his evidence or hers. Remember, Aeneas hath his happiness for all eternity at stake. Would it not tempt him to perjure himself, think you? Consider well whether he did not break the sacred bonds of hospitality by seeking thus my ruin. A man who as a guest accepts the hospitality of another and under guise of friendship breaks his faith is not worthy of the Elysian fields.
(*Dido, Anna and Barca whisper UP RC. The men confer UP LC. The judges confer*).

Proserpina: My husband, Pluto, it appeareth to me that this woman hath been greatly wronged by the Trojan. First, he hath dishonorably taken advantage of her kindness; second, made love to her in sport; and third, he hath deserted her.

Pluto: So Dido says; but if we are to believe the story of the Trojan there was no dishonor in all this.

Proserpina: No dishonor! To use her hospitality as a cloak to protect him from his enemies! To make love to her that he and his men might be safe from the Carthaginians! To see her passion rise and laugh at it behind her back.

Pluto: We cannot be sure that he has done these things. Silence, now! Rhadamanthus is about to speak.

Rhadamanthus (Standing): After a careful conference, we, the judges of this mighty court, do find that the evidence brought by the accuser is not thus far sufficient to condemn Aeneas. First, because it has not been proved that Aeneas did not honorably seek the love of Dido. On this point the evidence is not clear. Second, because the responsibility for this whole affair rests on the one who first sought the other's love. On this point we have evidence, it is true. However, the testimony of each witness directly contradicts the other. Third, the circumstances under which Aeneas left Carthage have not been fully explained. Therefore this court is not assured of the guilt of Aeneas, and must dismiss the case unless some further evidence is brought to bear.

Anna (C): That evidence I bring. When the court has heard it, ye cannot but condemn Aeneas. Only a part of his perfidy has been told, and the lesser part. If ye could have been assured the evidence we brought was true, ye would have admitted that he had been guilty of violating the hospitality shown him and that he displayed gross cowardice in using a woman's love to shield him from her nation's enmity.

Ilioneus (LC): These charges have been discussed and laid aside. Therefore, I must demand that no further reference be made to them. They stand repudiated, false charges, breathed by the thousand tongues of impious Rumor.

Rhadamanthus: The court sustains the objection of Ilioneus. Unless thou canst produce some further charge, I warn thee——

Anna (C): I can! An unanswerable charge, that of faithlessness and desertion. After Dido had yielded wholly to her love, when she and false Aeneas had spent many days together, planning the future greatness of Carthage, suddenly there came a change. Aeneas grew cold and weary of Dido. Perhaps he had heard rumors of the mighty Nomad kings, headed by Iarbas, who constantly threatened Dido's power. Perhaps he feared to meet their assault

and longed to fly like a coward. How can I, a mortal, judge of motives? This I know: He did refuse to hear her prayers; he did desert her; launching his fleet, he did ascend the waves and leave poor Dido on the shore behind. Was not this faithlessness? Was not this cowardice? Judge, ye gods, (*Spoken to Pluto and Proserpina*), who *can* read the hearts of men!

Ilioneus (LC): Again thou art interpreting the conduct of Aeneas as the jealous Dido saw it. She did not understand that a higher purpose called him away. Aeneas, the lover, would have ended his days in Carthage; Aeneas, the patriot, remembered that the gods had committed to his care the future greatness of the Trojan race. He has been commanded by Apollo to seek Italy, and there found a city for his people. As their leader, he had to disregard his own personal feelings. He was not a free agent.

Anna (C): Let Rhadamanthus decide what his motive was. Perchance the son of Laomedon had merely grown tired of his Carthaginian love. In that case, who could ask him to stay longer at her side? Love is a passing dream. It is a magic spell cast by the moonlight. For a while it is sweet, ah, sweet! But the first beams of Aurora break the charm. Why do we swear eternal love? Only sorrow lasts forever, and regret.

(*Anna crosses UP R and stands by Proserpina's throne. Proserpina leans over and whispers to her*).

Dido (RC): How could he be so cruel, so false, after his vows of love and deep affection? I was too happy in those golden days.

We were beset on every hand with hostile tribes. Then Aeneas came. I loved him from that fatal banquet night, when I reclined upon my royal couch, his lovely son, Ascanius, at my side, and heard him tell the story of old Troy. As his sweet voice related those thrilling happenings, I clasped the young child to my heart, which throbbed and swelled with love. "Here is a man," I thought, "fit to direct the destinies of my people. Alas! the bright mirage soon vanished, and left me in the desert of despair."

Ilioneus (LC): Fit to direct the destiny of a people! Yet, honor bound to do so. He was commissioned by the gods above to guide his exiled people to Lavinium. Canst thou not see he owed them all he had to give?

Dido (RC): In Carthage then they could have found a home. I offered it to them. They would have stayed gladly, but thou wast eager to desert me. When I urged thee not to be so mad as to put out to sea in the winter time, only to wait till spring, and then depart, even then thou wouldst not stay. Was this consideration for thy people? No, no, it was hate for me!

Aeneas (C): Thou askest me why I did not let my people settle in Carthage? I will tell thee. The Fates have decreed another destiny for the Trojans. The gods have foretold a city on the Tiber, a city of glistening temples white, crowning seven hills. It will become the ruler of a great world empire. The garden lands of Egypt and Assyria will be its tributaries. Proud Greece will bow before it. The Trojan blood will be exalted in the blood of Caesars. Yes! Such shall Rome be, the gods have dreamed, and gods have power to make their dreams come true. I was the agent whom they chose, and could but obey. So, though I loved the Queen of Carthage, that love could never be allowed to thwart the purpose of almighty Jove. Therefore, he dispatched Mercury from the Heavens to warn me not to tarry longer, but to seek Italy with the winds. Ah, then my heart was torn with cruel emotions. Duty summoned me away, though love for thee was raging in my heart. Didst thou call me cold? Say rather that I looked a seething furnace of love in a chill tomb of obedience to the gods. Didst thou say I would not hear thy prayers? If I had listened to them, Dido, all Neptune's fold could not have quenched my ardor, nor Hercules have dragged me from the coast of Lybia.

Dido (RC): If thou truly loved me, nothing could have torn thee from my side.

Aeneas (RC): The gods are jealous, and no man can place an earthly love above their will.

Dido (RC): The gods are cruel. They inflame the hearts of men with strange passions; they make them act insanely, to no purpose.

Aeneas (C): Nothing in life is quite without a reason. We are all pawns in a game the gods are playing, for high stakes, unknown to us. No tiny action is without its purpose. No life is lived or lost wholly in vain.

Dido (RC): Then wherefore did I leave Phoenicia and build my city in the desert?

Aeneas (C): Thy city will be a round in the tall ladder, by which Rome will climb to greatness.

Dido (RC): Thou cowardly knave! Dost thou presume to tell me that my city will be but a heap of stones and dust upon which thy cruel city may set its foot and raise its standard higher? Darest thou to insult me thus, here in this solemn court, before these stern judges? Hast thou not yet wronged me enough? So, thou mocker, I must be humiliated before all Pluto's court?

Aeneas (C): Forgive me, Dido, I spoke in thoughtless haste.

Dido (RC): At last the words have passed thy lips, "Forgive me." Why, thou self-righteous man, what have I to forgive? Thou hast obeyed the bidding of the gods! What wrong canst thou have committed? Nay, thou mockest me still. O, Anna, Anna! I can bear no more! The false one! O, the coward!
(*Anna supports her*).

Anna (R): Art thou satisfied now? Surely thou canst think of some new reproach to chide my sister with!

Aeneas: And in this court I thought to find justice, here, where false accusations follow me continually.
(*Turning wildly, Dido staggers to the throne and falls on her knees at the feet of Proserpina*).

Dido (R): Thou art a woman, and perchance thou canst pity a desolate sister scorned by men. If thou hast ever been an outcast from thy sweet home, pity me. If thou hast ever known the desolation and loneliness of a strange land, pity me! If thou hast ever had all that was dear to thee snatched away by a cruel whim of man, pity me! By thy good mother, Ceres, I beseech thee to have compassion upon a daughter of the earth! By the triple domain, I entreat thee to aid a royal queen brought low! By thy stern husband I beseech thee to meet out vengeance to this man!

Proserpina: My royal Pluto, where is the unforgiving justice which thou boastest? Has thy heart been moulded like putty by the fingers of this sculptor of hearts? Let a swift punishment overtake this boaster who glories in the favor of the gods. If he escapes, thy court will be the laughing stock of all Olympus.

Pluto (Rising): By all the Furies, that shall never be. Presumptuous Trojan, thou shalt mock my power no longer. Thou hast made a jest of the heart of a woman. Thou hast laughed at the decrees of my court. Perchance thou will not appreciate

the humor of a bath in the Phlegethon. I have not quite lost my merry wit. Before thou shalt leave my company, I will propound a jest to thee at which this whole assembly shall laugh, but, methinks, it will not seem so witty to thee. Ho, judges, what is your verdict in this case?

Aeneas (C): Is there no justice in the universe, for living nor for dead?

Anna (RC): Now plèad for thy life, thou false one. The gods thou obeyedst shall protect thee now, O goddess born!
(*Achates crosses in front of the others from L to R*).

Achates (R): Thou tyrant! Had I a band of Trojans at my back, I would depose thee from thy ebon throne! (*Ilioneus drags him back*).

Barca (L): Thou art vindicated now, my beloved mistress! Away with false Aeneas.

Anchises (L) (Kneeling before the judges): I pray you, noble judges, stain not your reputation for justice by the condemnation of my son!

Dido (Rising and speaking to Proserpina): My purpose is accomplished. I should rejoice. And yet—— And yet——.

Aeacus: Proud Trojan, now prepare to hear thy sentence.

Rhadamanthus (Rising): Silence, all! I hear strange voices without the very door of this, our judgment hall!
(*The Fates are heard chanting off the stage*).

The Fates:
Unlock the ebon gates;
Fling back the portals wide;
The concourse which awaits
Delay cannot abide.
The will of gods and men
Must bow beneath our sway;
E'en Phoebus pauses, when
The Parcae close the way.

All: The Fates! The Fates!
(*The judges, Pluto, and Proserpina stand. The rest kneel. Enter the Fates, LIE*).

Clotho (RC):
My distaff incessantly twirling,
With flaxen-like destinies wreathed,
Has been turning and spinning and turning
Since the spirit of life was first breathed;
Through my fingers the lives of all mortals
Pass slowly, are fashioned with care;
Before they can enter the portals
Of life, is their story writ there. (*Gesture with distaff*).

Lachesis (C): To me is given the weighty care
Of fitting each life into place
In this great fabric we prepare.
I study well each mortal's case;
Sometimes a sinewy fiber strong
Is needed in our mighty plan;
I measure on both stout and long;
A woman brave or stalwart man.

Atropos (LC): Once in the life of every man I come,
Not with the trumpet's blare and beat of drum,
But like a voice that calls him through the night.
And when he hears that summons soon or late,
He bows to the inexorable Fate,
He turns his back upon the joyous light,
Each one his little course to journey through,
Amassing riches transient as a breath,
Though he attain some pinnacle sublime,
I cut his life-thread at the destined time;
Then, stunned, he turns from life and faces death.

Pluto (R): Ye weavers of destinies, why have ye come to my kingdom?
Ye fashion lives and have naught to do with dead men's souls.

Clotho (RC): The destinies of nations have been swayed
By beauty many times; now the sad Fates
In answer to the prayers of Beauty's goddess,
Have journeyed even to the underworld
Before these judges to relate a tale.
The golden Aphrodite from on high
Beheld her son, Aeneas, pleading here;
She heard their accusations, his defense;
She saw the judges' hearts congealed to stone,
And knew that for the lack of this true story,
Which we alone, the Fates, could fully tell,
Her son must be condemned and Dido triumph.
And now at her request we stand before you
To justify the conduct of the Trojan.

Pluto: Depart and say to Venus, that she does ill to interfere in my realm. We have adjudged him guilty. We have found Aeneas wanting in manly virtue.

Lachesis (C): And there ye judged him wrong as I shall show.
When he was shipwrecked on the Lybian shore,
Through Juno's wrath, and when the Carthage queen
Received him in her city, Venus feared
The hostile race might work some harm upon him.
Therefore she snatched Ascanius away,
Putting her own son, Cupid, in his place.
The son of love, well versed in cunning wiles,

Remembering the counsels of his mother,
Plotted to make Queen Dido love Aeneas,
So that her love should shield him well against
The Carthaginians, who worship Juno.

Pluto: 'Tis clear we have been hasty in our judgment. The clashing evidence and varying motives in this case would have confused our brother Jove himself. The Fates alone can give a just decree. Say on.

Atropos (LC): So, at the banquet on that fateful night,
Young Love, parading as Ascanius,
Concealed a golden dart beneath his robe.
Then when Queen Dido called him to her side,
He slyly pricked her bosom and instilled
His love-begetting poison through her veins.
Soon as the magic power had filled her heart,
A mad, unreasoning love for bold Aeneas
Laid hold upon her. It wrought all the woes
Of which she now accuses this faultless man.

Dido (Down RC): Is this the truth? (*Faces the Fates, C, her back to the audience*).

Lachesis (C): It is, and more besides (*Dido sinks on her knees*), for Juno then,
Thinking to change Aeneas' destiny,
Arranged with Venus, who perceived her guile,
That these two should be joined in marriage bond.
Venus at last appealed to mighty Jove,
Who sent his messenger to summon
Aeneas to fulfill his destiny.
Not until then, Aeneas sailed away,
Obedient to the mandate of the gods.

Clotho (RC): Few men indeed would have been strong enough
To sacrifice a present happiness
To obtain a future blessing for his race,
Leaving his love because the Fates decreed.

(*The Fates cross to right of throne. Aeneas comes down center. Dido rises and faces him, RC*).

Dido (RC): I will not ask thee to forgive; thou hast suffered wrong at my hands past all forgiveness. Only permit me to confess my guilt. I have been made a sport of by the gods, and in my madness I have done—— I know not what.

Aeneas (C): Thou hast not harmed me, Dido. All thy rage has only served to make thee unhappy. I pardon fully thy attempt to injure; thou didst not know the truth.

Rhadamanthus: Aeneas, thou art free to leave this place and seek the Elysian Fields when thou so desirest. Dido, thou too may enter the gardens of the blessed, for it has been shown that all thou didst was done either in ignorance of the truth or else in madness.

(*Aeneas (LC) and Dido (RC) slip off their black robes, revealing white tunics beneath. Aeneas receives a white toga from Anchises and Anna gives Dido a white himation. Achates slips off his own black cloak and receives the black garments of the others. Pluto and Proserpina descend from their thrones and move off, followed by the three judges in single file. Dido goes off on the arm of Aeneas. Achates follows, Barca and Anna come next. Anchises and Ilioneus bring up the rear. The Fates are left alone on the stage. They step forward and repeat the following in unison).*

The Fates (Clotho (C), Lachesis (LC), and Atropos (RC), tableau, after Michael Angelo):

Now our mission here is ended,
For Aeneas' plight is mended,
By the sisters three;
Safely past the court infernal,
He has reached the realms eternal,
By the Fates' decree.
Gods and mortals in a chorus
In submission kneel before us,
Bowed on bended knee;
When we speak, without delaying,
All must hasten in obeying
What "The Fates Decree."

EXEUNT OMNES. CURTAIN.

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